

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (20804) - COMMUNICATING ABOUT AIR POLLUTION: THE PERSUASIVENESS OF A NARRATIVE MESSAGE TO PROMOTE CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT IN INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS

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Background and objectives

Today air pollution levels are partly due to individuals' behaviours, such as individual car use, household energy, and the consumption of luxury goods. It is indeed fundamental to understand how people perceive air pollution and its associated risks, in order to motivate them to change their behaviours and improve air quality. This research has two main objectives: (1) to explore the public perception of air pollution, focusing on individuals' perception of the psychological distance of its health and environmental consequences (Study 1); (2) to test whether presenting the risks of air pollution in a narrative vs statistical format is more effective, with regards to narrative engagement, efficacy appraisal, and individuals' intentions to change their behaviours (Study 2 and 3).

Process and methods (for empirical research)

Study 1 (N=263) is based on a survey measuring the public perception of air pollution, the perceived psychological distance of its environmental and health consequences, and the perceived effectiveness of different individual and collective pro-environmental behaviours. Study 2 (N=237) presents a 2(Format: narrative vs statistical) x 2(Focus: health vs environment) protocol. Study 3 (N=258) presents a 2(Format: narrative vs statistical) x 3(Stages of change) protocol, testing the effectiveness of a narrative format depending on individuals' stage of behavioural change.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Study 1: perceived distance and perceived effectiveness vary across different stages of behavioural change.

Study 2: format has an impact on engagement, but not on behavioural intention.

Study 3: the intention to engage in specific individual behaviours depends on the stage of behavioural change, and that individuals in the pre-action stage are more sensitive to the effects of narrative vs statistical format.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Overall, this research contributes to understanding narrative persuasion and its effects depending on the stage of behavioural change individuals are at, offering practical advice for the development of education and communication programs.

Palavras-chave : air pollution, psychological distance, narrative persuasion, behavioural change, collective action